



## Seattle Human Rights Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

7 City Council Members and the Seattle Human Rights Commission send letter of concern on Washington Private Prison contract

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SEATTLE—Seven Seattle City Council members, the Seattle Human Rights Commission, and over twenty five community organizations recently sent a letter to Secretary Dan Pacholke of the Washington State Department of Corrections.

The letter expresses concern that Washington Department of Corrections signed a contract with private prison company Geo Group Inc. to potentially send up to 1,000 Washington-based prisoners to a Geo Group prison in Michigan, should Washington's prisons become overcrowded. This contract was signed despite Geo Group Inc.'s long and documented record of mistreating prisoners, which rises to the level of international human rights violations. The letter further expresses concern that all alternatives to address Washington State's impending prison overcrowding situation had not been exhausted prior to entering into this contract, and that human rights violations within private prison facilities disproportionately impact communities of color.

The letter calls on the Department of Corrections to address the root causes of the overcrowding problem in Washington State prisons. Doing so requires a focus on eliminating racial inequities in the criminal justice system. It further calls on the Department of Corrections to assure that policies are aligned with the mission that those who serve prison time for wrongdoing have the greatest chance to be restored as full, productive members of our communities, and that the State of Washington eliminate contracts with private prison corporations and institutions that violate human rights.

The letter was originally addressed to former DOC Secretary Bernard Warner, who resigned from the Department of Corrections in September and accepted a position with a private prison operator.

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